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lish, through Chancellor's expedition to the White Sea in 1553, opened up the northern sea route. Ivan was also conscious of the economic advantages of owning a Baltic port and began operations against the Livonian order of German knights which controlled both the Gulf of Riga and the Gulf of Finland. After capturing Narva, he founded the Russian navy a century and a quarter before Peter the Great by confiscating and arming a number of German merchant vessels, for which he employed German and Swedish officers as commanders. Ivan's early successes proved a boomerang, however, since the Livonian order was dissolved and Esthonia was turned over to Sweden. This event automatically produced a collision with that country, allied with Lithuania, so that war became incessant on the western front until Ivan's death in 1584.

By that date the formation and the future policy of modern Russia was clearly defined. It was a foregone conclusion that future Russian sovereigns would extend Russian territory to the Black Sea. It was only a question of time when the weakening of Poland and Lithuania would bring the Dnieper valley and White Russia under Muscovite sway. It had become a cardinal item of Russian policy to control the Finnish Gulf, and maritime commerce with the west would traverse those waters as soon as ports were either conquered or developed. The long period of Russian isolation from Europe was ended, and the difficult process of acquiring modern European techniques was about to begin. Russia had graduated from oriental domination and was on its way to becoming a major European power, never to approach the East again, save in the hope of conquest.

In view of the gradual evolution of Muscovite sovereignty, it is important to understand also the origins of autocracy in Moscow itself. For autocracy was by no means inevitable or universal in medieval Russia, and in the principality of Kiev the early princes had always had to reckon with town assemblies which supervised and even frequently deposed them. The influence of these assemblies was large in any medieval Russian city of which the economic and political status had been deter-